



U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary

F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr., Chairman

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News Advisory

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Contact: Jeff Lungren/Terry Shawn
202-225-2492

GAO Report Finds that Sex Offenders are Petitioning to Bring Spouses and Children into U.S.

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report today <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d06735.pdf> finding that an alarming number of convicted sex offenders successfully petitioned to bring spouses, fiances, and children into the United States in 2005. The report found that:

- 398 sex offenders filed a total of 420 petitions in fiscal year 2005 for spouses, fiances, children and other relatives.
- These sex offenders were convicted of at least 411 sex-related crimes, including 45 convictions of crimes against children.
- Criminal sex offenders petitioned for at least 61 children.

House Judiciary Immigration, Border Security, and Claims Subcommittee Chairman John N. Hostettler (R-Ind.), who was among those requesting this GAO report, said, “Too often we hear heart-wrenching stories of how sex offenders prey upon their victims, particularly children, and wonder, ‘How could this happen?’ I am determined to examine every possible legislative remedy to ensure that our immigration system does not put women and children in harms’ way by allowing convicted sex offenders to file petitions to bring them to the United States.”

Under current immigration law, convicted sex offenders are not prohibited from petitioning to bring family members to the United States. U.S. Customs and Immigration Services may not deny a petition on the basis that the petitioner has been convicted of a sex-related crime.

In September of 2005, the House passed an amendment authored by Congressman Steve King (R-Iowa) to the Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act (H.R. 3402) that would have prevented individuals convicted of sexual assault, domestic violence, elder abuse, and dating violence from petitioning to bring in family members. This provision was removed by the Senate in conference.

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